



Becoming a Skilled Collaborator

Step 1 for becoming a skilled collaborator is to take a good, strong look at yourself. Unless you can identify what you do best in a team situation, and what you do less well, you won't be able to improve. The team skills also apply to collaboration with individuals. As a start, measure yourself on the following skills and abilities. Place a plus (+) by each item you can say honestly that you do very, very well and a minus (-) by each you think others might say you need to improve.

- ___ Do I listen attentively without forming a premature opinion of what the speaker is saying?
- ___ Do I focus fully on the speaker without trying to multi-task?
- ___ Do I communicate clearly without adding unhelpful information?
- ___ Do I speak only if I have full knowledge of a subject?
- ___ Do I ask the right questions to get to the root of an issue?
- ___ Do I focus on big issues instead of thinking about less important questions?
- ___ Do I think rather than in situations?
- ___ Can I connect the dots between my ideas and those of others in order to see a situation fully?
- ___ Have I built relationships that cause people to trust my judgment?
- ___ Am I cooperative and willing to pitch in, even if I don't get credit?
- ___ Do I look for areas of agreement, instead of disagreement, in a situation?
- ___ Do I "sell" instead of "tell"?
- ___ Am I good at expressing appreciation to others who disagree with my ideas?

Each of the strengths highlighted in the questions above is important to becoming a good collaborator. If you placed a minus sign beside more than two questions, you need to work on your collaboration skills.

Action: Start a conversation with a classmate or friend about a problem you want to solve or a decision you need to make. After the conversation, check yourself on each point above. How many pluses and minuses do you count? If you have more than two minuses, what can you do to change? You might discuss subjects such as: What should we do together this weekend? or What is the best way for us to study for the upcoming test? You might discuss with a co-worker a situation such as, Where is the best place to store all these new supplies that have been delivered? or How can we make this graph more attractive for the client?